

ANTI-GALLING FASTENER INSERTS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to fastener inserts and, more particularly, to anti-galling inserts formed from a hardened stainless steel metal alloy which are useful in both substrates and nut assemblies.

Fastener assemblies come in a variety of shapes, sizes, designs and materials. Many fastening assemblies include not only a fastener such as a bolt, pin or screw, but also will include a fastener insert to be positioned within a tapped hole. One specific type of fastener insert useful in association with a threaded fastener is the helically coiled wire insert as described in U.S. Patent No. 2,672,070 entitled "Wire Coil Screw Thread Insert for Molded Material", for example.

Generally speaking, tapped threads are strengthened due to the inherent flexibility of such helically coiled wire inserts since the insert provides a more balanced distribution of dynamic and static loads throughout the length of thread engagement. This flexibility also compensates for variation in lead and angle error.

Additionally, since the helically coiled insert does not exhibit staking, locking or swaging and does not require keying in place, helically coiled wire inserts greatly reduce stress which would otherwise be transferred to the receiving substrate. While such helically coiled wire inserts are generally useful as anchoring mechanisms for threaded fasteners in order to be used in high strength applications, such inserts must be formed from high strength materials. Heretofore, 302/304 stainless steels have been used to manufacture fastener inserts.

Due to the intimate connection between the threads of the fastener and the

insert, shearing forces are exerted on the fastener insert upon attachment of the fastener. As a result of the shearing forces, fastener inserts formed from 302/304 type stainless steels have exhibited a propensity to galling despite such stainless steels being considered among the hardest in the industry.

5 Although galling and wear may occur under similar conditions, the types of deterioration involved are not similar. Galling occurs as a result of movements occurring along a metal-to-metal contact in a localized area which results in grooving and self-welding of the metals at the localized areas. This, in turn, leads to seizure of the metal parts.

10 On the other hand, wear is synonymous with abrasion and can result from metal-to-metal contact or metal-to-nonmetal contact. Such wear is characterized by relatively uniform loss of metal from the surface, as contrasted to localized grooving with consequent metal build-up, as a result of rubbing a much harder metallic surface against a softer metallic surface.

15 An article by Harry Tanczyn, entitled "Stainless Steel Galling Characteristics Checked" in STEEL, April 20, 1954 points out that stainless steel sections at a relatively high hardness level or with a substantial difference in hardness, exhibit better resistance to galling than the combination of two soft members. This may be explained by the theory that the hardened sections deform elastically near the contact points
20 under loading, while the softer pieces yield plastically for a significant distance beneath the contact points. During movement, the hardened surfaces apparently recover elastically with decrease in pressure, and this motion tends to sever any metallic welding.

 Among the numerous prior art steels currently available, the austenitic Type 304

is suited to a variety of uses involving welding and fabrication, but the galling and wear resistance of this steel are poor and the metal is likely to fail when subjected to such conditions.

In view of the perceived problems with galling, the art has recently turned to cobalt bearing and high nickel alloys which are known to fight wear and galling.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore a primary object of the present invention to provide stainless steel fastener inserts which tend to limit, if not eliminate, galling in fastener assemblies.

To accomplish this objective, among others, the present invention relates to an anti-galling fastener insert comprising a body formed from a nitrogen strengthened stainless steel alloy. The stainless steel alloy preferably will include a positive amount up to a total of about 0.8% nitrogen. More particularly, the present invention relates to a nitrogen strengthened stainless steel insert formed from an alloy comprising: a) from about 0.05 to 0.15% carbon; b) from about 5.0 to 12.0% manganese; c) from about 2.0 to 6.0% silicon; d) from about 12.0 to 20.0% chromium; e) from about 6.0 to 12.0% nickel; f) from about 0.02 to 0.8% nitrogen; with the remainder being iron.

Still more preferably, the fastener insert is formed from a nitrogen strengthened stainless steel alloy comprising a) from about 0.07 to 0.12% carbon; b) from about 7.0 to 10.0% manganese; c) from about 3.0 to 5.0% silicon; d) from about 14.0 to 18.0% chromium; e) from about 7.0 to 10.0% nickel; f) from about 0.06 to 0.3% nitrogen; with the remainder being iron.

According to a highly preferred embodiment, the fastener insert will be formed from a nitrogen strengthened austenitic stainless steel alloy comprising: a) from about

0.08 to 0.1% carbon; b) from about 7.0 to 9.0% manganese; c) from about 3.5 to 4.5% silicon; d) from about 16.0 to 18.0% chromium; e) from about 8.0 to 9.0% nickel; f) from about 0.08 to 0.18% nitrogen; with the remainder being iron.

After forming the alloy into a round wire and allowing the wire to cool to room temperature, the wire is shaped to a diamond cross section and subsequently formed into insert. The resulting fastener inserts should have excellent anti-galling characteristics at both ambient and elevated temperatures. Further, the fastener inserts should have good corrosion resistance and a room temperature yield strength which surprisingly is almost twice that of fastener inserts formed from 304 type stainless steel. The nitrogen strengthened stainless steel fastener inserts of the present invention also provide excellent oxidation resistance and excellent impact strength, particularly at sub-zero temperatures.

The present invention also relates to an anti-galling free running nut assembly. The nut assembly includes a nut having an internal screw thread barrel and a helically coiled fastener insert formed from an alloy comprising: a) from about 0.05 to 0.15% carbon; b) from about 5.0 to 12.0% manganese; c) from about 2.0 to 6.0% silicon; d) from about 12.0 to 20.0% chromium; e) from about 6.0 to 12.0% nickel; f) from about 0.02 to 0.8% nitrogen; with the remainder being iron.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a blown apart perspective view of a fastener assembly including a helically wound insert;

Fig. 2 is an assembly view in cross-section of the fastener assembly of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a blown apart perspective view of a nut assembly including a helically

a wound insert; and

Fig. 4 is an assembly view in cross-section of the nut assembly of Fig. 3 ~~and~~

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

5 Referring to Figs. 1 - 2, there is shown an anti-galling fastener insert 10 formed from a nitrogen strengthened stainless steel alloy in accordance with the teachings of the present invention. The fastener insert, which may be of a variety of shapes and sizes, is shown to be in the form of a helically coiled wire to be used in association with a threaded fastener 12. As shown, the insert is positioned within a threaded aperture 16 provided along a substrate 14 to secure an object 30 in combination with the fastener.

To form the fastener insert 10, an alloy comprising a) from about 0.05 to .15% carbon; b) from about 5.0 to 12.0% manganese; c) from about 2.0 to 6.0% silicon; d) from about 12.0 to 20.0% chromium; e) from about 6.0 to 12.0% nickel; f) from about 0.02 to 0.8% nitrogen; with the remainder being iron.

10 Preferably, the fastener inserts 10 are manufactured such that they are larger in diameter, before installation, than the tapped holes within which they are employed to ensure that they become firmly secured. For helically wound fastener inserts, it is preferable that the coils have about a 60° internal screw thread convolution which can
15 accommodate virtually any standard threaded bolt or screw. Additionally, the fastener inserts may include removable or break away tangs ^{20 101} which are useful during the insertion process.

The alloys employed to form the anti-galling fastener inserts of the present invention have been analyzed using a "button and block" galling test to rank various

stainless steel alloys for their galling tendencies. According to the procedure, a dead load weight was applied in a Brinell Hardness Tester on two flat, polished surfaces (10 - 20 micro-inches). Buttons having a 0.5 inch diameter were slowly rotated by hand 360° under the load and then examined for galling at a 7X magnification. If no galling was apparent, new specimens were tested at higher stresses until galling was observed. The "threshold" galling stress was selected as the stress midway between the highest non-galled stress and the stress where galling was first observed. As illustrated in Table 1 below, the alloys of the present invention had values of greater than 50, thereby significantly outperforming all other stainless steel alloys tested for galling characteristics.

TABLE 1

| Conditions & Nominal Hardness (Brinell) | Type 410 | Type 416 | Type 430 | Type 440C | Type 303 | Type 304 | Type 316 | Alloy of Present Invention |
|---|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------------|
| Type 410 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 50+ |
| Type 416 | 4 | 13 | 3 | 21 | 9 | 24 | 42 | 50 |
| Type 430 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 36 |
| Type 440C | 3 | 21 | 2 | 11 | 5 | 3 | 37 | 50+ |
| Type 303 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 50+ |
| Type 304 | 2 | 24 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 50+ |
| Type 316 | 2 | 42 | 2 | 37 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 38 |
| Alloy of Present Invention | 50+ | 50+ | 36 | 50+ | 50+ | 50+ | 38 | 50+ |

Fastener inserts manufactured using the alloys of the present invention as well as inserts formed from Type 304 stainless steels were installed into aluminum blocks provided with #10-32 size bores to fastener bores for analysis.

To analyze for resistance to friction forces, a comparison was made between

"standard tapped hole assemblies" and assemblies incorporating the fastener inserts of the present invention. The so-called standard tapped holes included preparing Type 316 stainless steel test blocks with #10-32 size threaded bores which were electropolished and introducing both plain and chemically polished Type 316 stainless steel screws which were cleaned to electronic industry standards. While Type 304 stainless steel inserts were originally used in the standard tapped hole assemblies, the torque required for rotation of the screws varied so drastically from one sample to the next that no quantitative data could be compiled. As such, the analysis on the standard tapped hole assemblies were carried out without fastener inserts.

The fastener assemblies of the present invention included aluminum test blocks with #10-32 size threaded bores and fastener inserts formed from the above described alloys. Again, both plain and chemically polished Type 316 stainless steel screws were used to measure the friction forces. Torque tests were conducted with test blocks perfectly aligned as well as misaligned by 2 and 4 degrees from perpendicular. The torque was recorded for twenty screws under each assembly with ten insertions for each screw.

As should be understood by those skilled in the art, friction between a screw and a tapped hole can diminish the pre-load on the screw by absorbing some of the rotational torque during installation. In extreme instances, the friction during rotation can lead to galling and self-welding, thus, resulting in seizure of the fastener.

The torque required to rotate the stainless steel screws in the standard tapped holes increased from the first to the tenth insertion and increased dramatically with an increase in the angle of misalignment. The calculated installation torque

increased by as much as 77%.

The torque required for rotation of the same stainless steel screws within the fastener assemblies of the present invention were between 17% to 44% lower than the comparable standard tapped holes. Additionally the friction forces generated with an increase in the misalignment angle were significantly lower than the standard tapped holes. Perhaps most importantly, the required torque values for the fastener assemblies employing the inserts of the present invention were substantially uniform as compared to the standard. As such, the holding power of the screws from one application to the next should be relatively consistent.

Referring to Figs. 3 and 4, a nut assembly 20 incorporating an anti-galling fastener insert 10 is shown. The nut assembly may be free running or a locking assembly. By free running, it is meant that the anti-galling insert disposed within the nut barrel has substantially symmetrical helical coil over its entire length, whereas a locking nut includes an insert having at least one unsymmetrical combination, usually including straight segments. The nut assembly includes a nut 22 and an anti-galling fastener insert 10. The nut 22, which may be made on a conventional nut making machine, includes a barrel 24 of generally constant pitch and diameter throughout. Upon installing the insert 10 within the nut barrel 24, the internal threads of the nut may be deformed at each end 32 and 32A, respectively, to prevent the insert from becoming disengaged from the nut.

Upon forming the nut assembly 20, a fastener such as a threaded bolt or a stud can be inserted into the nut including the fastener insert to retain an object 30. The nut assembly not only is resistant to galling as defined above, but also provides a more uniform torque and more accurate preload or clamp up.

While it will be apparent that the preferred embodiments of the invention disclosed are well calculated to fulfill the objects stated, it will be appreciated that the invention is susceptible to modification, variation and change without departing from the spirit thereof.

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